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Venezuela: Opposition Leader Marquez Supports President

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[Interview with Pompeyo Marquez, secretary general of the Movement for Socialism, by Jenny Silva at Miraflores Presidential Palace in Caracas -- live]

[Text] [Silva] We are again reporting from the front of Miraflores Palace. Here is Senator Pompeyo Marquez, an important leader of the Movement for Socialism [MAS]. How does MAS see this situation?

[Marquez] We had been saying for some time, since the rumors about the possibility of a coup started, that there are suitable conditions for a movement of this nature. We also have said that this kind of movement is not the way to resolve Venezuelan problems.

We have said that whoever thinks of using the military to resolve the Venezuelan crisis is completely wrong. Latin America's experience, Venezuela's own experience, prove this.

Those of us who have endured dictatorships for many years know that the most imperfect democracy is better than the best dictatorship, which could appear at first glance to be a better administrator, to use a polemical term. The problems of Venezuelan democracy can be resolved by democratic development, by more democracy to resolve democratic deficiencies. In this regard, it is important to maintain this development, to defend institutionality and constitutionality.

President Perez is president because he was elected for a five-year period and President Perez has to complete his period. There is another element, the idea of an assassination, something that is damnable anywhere and that in Venezuela we must emphatically condemn.

To conclude: What the nation has to do is to think very carefully. The chief of state now has to assume more responsibilities. This military uprising has created a new situation; this makes it obligatory to make rectifications, to make changes. The president will have to talk with the nation to see what formulas we may find to face the most critical situation: the social situation, the degree of poverty being endured by a large majority in our nation.

[Silva] The secretary general of the Social Christian Party said here a few minutes ago that one of the factors that most contributed to the rebellion is a huge discredit campaign that has been waged

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against the democratic system, the fact that only the bad aspects of the system have been spotlighted, that the good and positive aspects of the system have been minimized, including the work that has been carried out lately. How do you see this situation?

[Marquez] Yes, this is true. What happens is that in recent years the inadequate conditions have become worse, and this is what the people notice. Among these inadequate conditions is one that must be mentioned: extreme poverty, the degree of poverty. This is the keystone of the problem. A democratic regime cannot function where there is so much misery, so much hunger, so many difficulties.

This is why we have insistently told President Perez and his economic cabinet that the social and economic policy must have a turnabout to tackle the root of the problem, the problem I have just mentioned.

[Silva] In view of what has happened, does MAS back President Perez?

[Marquez] Without a doubt. He is the president of all Venezuelans. In this regard, there is no government party or opposition parties. President Perez must complete his presidential term. The president who is to replace him must be elected through direct, universal, and secret voting. This cannot be done through the imposition of force. This cannot be done by a military group that uses the weapons given to them by the people. Such a group cannot impose any kind of government on the Venezuelan people.

[Silva] Thank you, Pompeyo Marquez.

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